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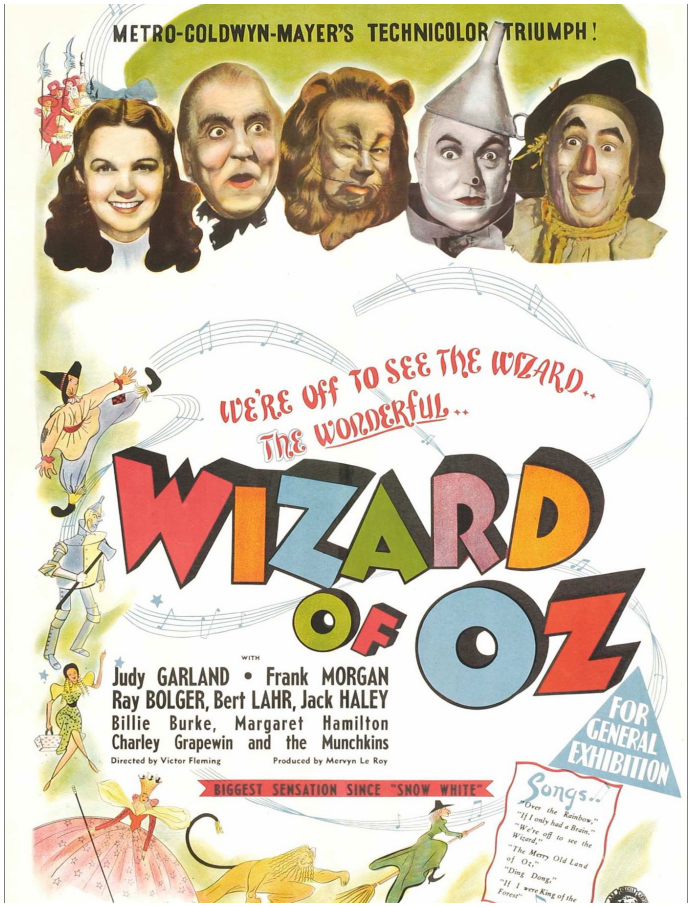

The Wizard of Oz (1939)
Directed by Victor Fleming

Cast

Judy Garland as Dorothy Gale
Frank Morgan as Professor Marvel/ The Wizard
Ray Bolger as Hunk/ The Scarecrow
Bert Lahr as Zeke/ The Cowardly Lion
Jack Haley as Hickory/ The Tin Man
Bille Burke as Glinda
Margaret Hamilton as Miss Gulch/ Witch
Clara Blandick as Aunt Em
Charley Grapewin as Uncle Henry
Pat Walshe as Nikko
The Singer Midgets as The Munchkins

Credits

Directed by Victor Fleming
Produced by Melvyn Leroy
Written by Noel Langley
Florence Ryerson
Edgar Allan Woolf
Cinematography Harold Rosson
Music by Harold Arlen
E.Y. Harburg
Musical Score by Herbert Stothart
Distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
Release Date August 15, 1939
Budget $2,777,000
Box Office $3,017,000

The Wizard of Oz is a 1939 American musical fantasy film produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and the most well-known and commercially successful adaptation based on the 1900 novel The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by L. Frank Baum. The film stars Judy Garland; Terry the dog, billed as Toto; Ray Bolger, Jack Haley, Bert Lahr, Frank Morgan, Billie Burke, Margaret Hamilton with Charley Grapewin and Clara Balndick, and the Singer Midgets as the Munchkins, with Pat Walshe as leader of the flying monkeys. Notable for its use of Technicolor, fantasy storytelling, musical score and unusual characters, over the years it has become one of the best-known films and part of American popular culture. It also featured in cinema what may be for the time the most elaborate use of character make-ups and special effects. It was not a box office success on its initial release, earning only $3,017,000 on a $2,777,000 budget, despite receiving largely positive reviews.The film was MGM's most expensive production at that time, and did not recoup much of the studio's investment until subsequent re-releases. It was nominated for six Academy Awards, including Best Picture but lost to Gone With the Wind. It did win in two other categories including Best Original Song for "Over The Rainbow." The song was ranked first in two lists: the AFI's 100 Years… 100 Songs and the Recording Industry of America's "365 Songs of the Century".

Development and pre-production
Development of the film started when Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs showed that films adapted from popular children's stories and fairytale folklore could be successful.[2][8] In January 1938, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer bought the rights to the hugely popular novel from Samuel Goldwyn, who had toyed with the idea of making the film as a vehicle for Eddie Cantor, who was under contract to the Goldwyn studios and whom Goldwyn wanted to cast as the Scarecrow.[8]

The script went through a number of writers and revisions before the final shooting.[9] Originally, Mervyn LeRoy's assistant William H. Cannon submitted a brief four-page outline.[9] Because recent fantasy films had not fared well at the box office, he recommended that the magical elements of the story be toned down or eliminated. In his outline, the Scarecrow was a man so stupid that the only way he could get employment was to dress up as a scarecrow and scare away crows in a cornfield, and the Tin Woodman was a hardened criminal so heartless he was sentenced to be placed in a tin suit for eternity. The torture of being encased in the suit had softened him and made him gentle and kind.[9] His vision was similar to Larry Semon's 1925 film adaptation of the story, in which the magical element is absent.

After that, LeRoy hired screenwriter Herman J. Mankiewicz to work on a script. Despite Mankiewicz's notorious reputation at that time for being an alcoholic, he soon delivered a 17-page draft of the Kansas scenes, and a few weeks later, he handed in a further 56 pages. Noel Langley and poet Ogden Nash were also hired to write separate versions of the story. None of the three writers involved knew anyone else was working on a script, but it was not an uncommon procedure. Nash soon delivered a four-page outline, Langley turned in a 43-page treatment and a full film script. He turned in three more, this time incorporating the songs that had been written by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg. No sooner had he completed it than Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf submitted a script and were brought on board to touch up the writing. They would be responsible for making sure the story stayed true to the Baum book. However, producer Arthur Freed was unhappy with their work and reassigned it back to Langley.[10] During filming, Victor Fleming and John Lee Mahin revised the script further, adding and cutting some scenes. In addition, Jack Haley and Bert Lahr are known to have written some of their own dialogue for the Kansas sequence.

The final draft of the script was completed on October 8, 1938, following numerous rewrites.[11] All in all, it was a mish-mash of many creative minds, but Langley, Ryerson and Woolf got the film credits. Along with the contributors already mentioned, others who assisted with the adaptation without receiving official credit include: Irving Brecher, Herbert Fields, Arthur Freed, E. Y. Harburg, Samuel Hoffenstein, Jack Mintz, Sid Silvers, Richard Thorpe, George Cukor and King Vidor.[8]

In addition, songwriter Harburg's son (and biographer) Ernie Harburg reported:[12]
So anyhow, Yip also wrote all the dialogue in that time and the setup to the songs and he also wrote the part where they give out the heart, the brains and the nerve, because he was the final script editor. And he — there was eleven screenwriters on that — and

he pulled the whole thing together, wrote his own lines and gave the thing a coherence and unity which made it a work of art. But he doesn't get credit for that. He gets lyrics by E. Y. Harburg, you see. But nevertheless, he put his influence on the thing.

The original producers thought that a 1939 audience was too sophisticated to accept Oz as a straight-ahead fantasy; therefore, it was reconceived as a lengthy, elaborate dream. Because of a perceived need to attract a youthful audience through appealing to modern fads and styles, the score originally featured a song called "The Jitterbug," and the script originally featured a scene with a series of musical contests. A spoiled, selfish princess in Oz had outlawed all forms of music except classical and operetta and went up against Dorothy in a singing contest in which her swing style enchanted listeners and won the grand prize. This part was initially written for Betty Jaynes.[13] The plan was later dropped.

Another scene, which was removed before final script approval and never filmed, was a concluding scene back in Kansas after Dorothy's return. Hunk (the Kansan counterpart to the Scarecrow) is leaving for agricultural college and extracts a promise from Dorothy to write to him. The implication of the scene is that romance will eventually develop between the two, which also may have been intended as an explanation for Dorothy's partiality for the Scarecrow over her other two companions. This plot idea was never totally dropped, however; it is especially noticeable in the final script when Dorothy, just before she is to leave Oz, tells the Scarecrow, "I think I'll miss you most of all."[14]
In his book The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Baum describes Kansas as being 'in shades of gray.' Further, Dorothy lived inside a farmhouse which had its paint blistered and washed away by the weather, giving it an 'air of grayness.' The house and property were situated in the middle of a sweeping prairie where the grass was burnt gray by harsh sun. Aunt Em and Uncle Henry were 'gray with age.' Effectively, the use of monochrome sepia tones for the Kansas sequences was a stylistic choice that evoked the dull and gray countryside.[citation needed] Much attention was given to the use of color in the production, with the MGM production crew favoring some hues over others. Consequently, it took the studio's art department almost a week to settle on the final shade of yellow used for the Yellow Brick Road.[15]

Casting
Mervyn LeRoy had always insisted that he wanted to cast Judy Garland to play Dorothy from the start; however, evidence suggests that negotiations occurred early in pre-production for Shirley Temple to be cast as Dorothy, on loan out from 20th Century Fox. A persistent rumor also existed that Fox was in turn promised Clark Gable and Jean Harlow as a loan from MGM. The tale is almost certainly untrue, as Harlow died in 1937, before MGM had even purchased the rights to the story. Despite this, the story appears in many film biographies (including Temple's own autobiography). The documentary The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: The Making of a Movie Classic states that Mervyn LeRoy was under pressure to cast Temple, then the most popular child star; but at an unofficial audition, MGM musical mainstay Roger Edens listened to her sing and felt that an actress with a different style was needed. Newsreel footage is included in which Temple wisecracks, "There's no place like home," suggesting that she was being considered for

the part at that time.[16] A possibility is that this consideration did indeed take place, but that Gable and Harlow were not part of the proposed deal.

Actress Deanna Durbin, who was under contract to Universal, was also considered for the part of Dorothy. Durbin, at the time, far exceeded Garland in film experience and fan base and both had co-starred in a 1936 two-reeler titled Every Sunday. The film was most notable for exhibiting Durbin's operatic style of singing against Garland's jazzier style. Durbin was possibly passed over once it was decided to bring on Betty Jaynes, also an operatic singer, to rival Garland's jazz in the aforementioned discarded subplot of the film.

Ray Bolger was originally cast as the Tin Man and Buddy Ebsen (later famous for his role as Jed Clampett on the popular 1960s TV show The Beverly Hillbillies) was to play the Scarecrow.[11] Bolger, however, longed to play the Scarecrow, as his childhood idol Fred Stone had done on stage in 1902; with that very performance, Stone had inspired him to become a vaudevillian in the first place. Now unhappy with his role as the Tin Man (reportedly claiming, "I'm not a tin performer; I'm fluid"), Bolger convinced producer Mervyn LeRoy to recast him in the part he so desired.[17] Ebsen did not object; after going over the basics of the Scarecrow's distinctive gait with Bolger (as a professional dancer, Ebsen had been cast because the studio was confident he would be up to the task of replicating the famous "wobbly-walk" of Stone's Scarecrow), he recorded all of his songs, went through all the rehearsals as the Tin Man, and began filming with the rest of the cast.[18]

Bert Lahr was signed for the Cowardly Lion on July 25, 1938; the next month, Charles Grapewin was cast as Uncle Henry on August 12.

W. C. Fields was originally chosen for the role of the Wizard, a role turned down by Ed Wynn as he thought the part was too small, but the studio ran out of patience after protracted haggling over Fields' fee; instead, another contract player, Frank Morgan, was cast on September 22.

Gale Sondergaard was originally cast as the Wicked Witch. She became unhappy when the witch's persona shifted from sly and glamorous (thought to emulate the wicked queen in Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs) into the familiar "ugly hag." She turned down the role and was replaced on October 10, 1938, just three days before filming started, by MGM contract player Margaret Hamilton. Sondergaard said in an interview for a bonus feature on the DVD that she had no regrets about turning down the part, and would go on to play a glamorous villain in Fox's version of Maurice Maeterlinck's The Blue Bird in 1940; that same year, Margaret Hamilton would play a role remarkably similar to the Wicked Witch in the Judy Garland film Babes in Arms. According to Aljean Harmetz, when the wardrobe department was looking for a coat for Frank Morgan, they decided that they wanted a once elegant coat that had "gone to seed." They went to a second-hand shop and purchased a whole rack of coats, from which Morgan, the head of the wardrobe department, and director Fleming chose one they thought had the perfect appearance of shabby gentility. One day, while he was on

set wearing the coat, Morgan turned out one of the pockets and discovered a label indicating that the coat had once belonged to Oz author L. Frank Baum. Mary Mayer, a unit publicist for the film, contacted the tailor and Baum's widow, who both verified that the coat had indeed once belonged to the writer. After filming was completed, the coat was presented to Mrs. Baum. Baum biographer Michael Patrick Hearn disbelieves the story, it having been refuted by members of the Baum family, who never saw the coat or knew of the story, as well as by Margaret Hamilton, who considered it a concocted studio rumor.[19]

Filming

Filming commenced October 13, 1938 on the MGM Studios lot in Culver City, California, under the direction of Richard Thorpe (replacing original director Norman Taurog, who only filmed a few early Technicolor tests and was then reassigned). Thorpe initially shot about two weeks of footage (nine days, total) involving Dorothy's first encounter with the Scarecrow, as well as a number of sequences in the Wicked Witch's castle, such as Dorothy's rescue (which, though unreleased, comprises the only footage of Buddy Ebsen's Tin Man).

According to most sources, ten days into the shoot, Ebsen suffered a reaction to the aluminum powder makeup he wore; the powder he breathed in daily as it was applied had coated his lungs. Ebsen was hospitalized in critical condition, and subsequently was forced to leave the project; in a later interview (included on the 2005 DVD release of The Wizard of Oz), Ebsen recalled the studio heads initially disbelieving that he was seriously ill, only realizing the extent of the actor's condition when they showed up in the hospital as he was convalescing in an iron lung. Ebsen's sudden medical departure caused the film to shut down while a new actor was found to fill the part. No full footage of Ebsen as the Tin Man has ever been released — only photographs taken during filming and test photos of different makeup styles remain. MGM did not publicize the reasons for Ebsen's departure until decades later, in a promotional documentary about the film. His replacement, Jack Haley, simply assumed he had been fired.[20] Author and screen-writer George MacDonald Fraser offers an alternative story, told to him by Burt Lancaster's producing partner Jim Hill, saying Ebsen had refused to be painted silver and was fired.[21]

Producer Mervyn LeRoy, after reviewing the footage and feeling Thorpe was rushing the production, adversely affecting the actors' performances, had Thorpe replaced. During reorganization on the production, George Cukor temporarily took over, under LeRoy's guidance. Initially, the studio had made Garland wear a blond wig and heavy, "baby-doll" makeup, and she played Dorothy in an exaggerated fashion; now, Cukor changed Judy Garland's and Margaret Hamilton's makeup and costumes, and told Garland to "be herself." This meant that all the scenes Garland and Hamilton had already completed had to be discarded and re-filmed. Cukor also suggested that the studio cast Jack Haley, on loan from 20th Century Fox, as the Tin Woodsman. To keep down on production costs, Haley only re-recorded "If I Only Had a Heart" and solo lines during "The Jitterbug" and "If I Only Had the Nerve;" as such, Ebsen's voice can still be heard in the remaining songs featuring the Tin Man in group vocals. The makeup used for

Haley was quietly changed to an aluminum paste, with a layer of clown white greasepaint underneath to protect his skin; although it did not have the same dire effect on Haley, he did at one point suffer an eye infection from it.

In addition, Ray Bolger's original recording of "If I Only Had a Brain" had been far more sedate compared to the version heard in the film; during this time, Cukor and LeRoy decided that a more energetic rendition would better suit Dorothy's initial meeting with the Scarecrow (initially, it was to contrast with his lively manner in Thorpe's footage), and was re-recorded as such. At first thought to be lost for over seven decades, a recording of this original version was rediscovered in 2009.[22]

Cukor did not actually shoot any scenes for the film, merely acting as something of a "creative advisor" to the troubled production, and, because of his prior commitment to direct Gone with the Wind, he left on November 3, 1938, at which time Victor Fleming assumed the directorial responsibility. As director, Fleming chose not to shift the film from Cukor's creative realignment, as producer LeRoy had already pronounced his satisfaction with the new course the film was taking.

Production on the bulk of the Technicolor sequences was a long and cumbersome process that ran for over six months, from October 1938 to March 1939. Most of the actors worked six days a week and had to arrive at the studio as early as four or five in the morning, to be fitted with makeup and costumes, and would not leave until seven or eight at night. Cumbersome makeup and costumes were made even more uncomfortable by the daylight-bright lighting the early Technicolor process required, which could heat the set to over 100 °F. According to Ray Bolger, most of the Oz principals were banned from eating in the studio's commissary due to their costumes. Margaret Hamilton's witch makeup meant that she could not eat solid food, so she practically lived on a liquid diet during filming of the Oz sequences. Additionally, it took upwards of 12 takes to have Dorothy's dog Toto run alongside the actors as they skipped down the Yellow Brick Road.

All of the Oz sequences were filmed in three-strip Technicolor.[8][9] The opening and closing credits, as well as the Kansas sequences, were filmed in black and white and colored in a sepia tone process.[8] Sepia-toned film was also used in the scene where Aunt Em appears in the Wicked Witch's crystal ball.

The massive shoot also proved to be somewhat chaotic. This was most evident when trying to put together the Munchkinland sequences. MGM talent scouts searched the country far and wide to come up with over a hundred little people who would make up the citizens of Munchkinland; this meant that most of the film's Oz sequences would have to already be shot before work on the Munchkinland sequence could begin. According to Munchkin actor Jerry Maren, each little person was paid over $125 a week for their performances. Munchkin Meinhardt Raabe, who played the coroner, revealed in the 1990 documentary The Making of the Wizard of Oz that the MGM costume and wardrobe department, under the direction of designer Adrian, had to design over one hundred costumes for the Munchkin sequences. They then had to photograph and

catalog each Munchkin in his or her costume so that they could correctly apply the same costume and makeup each day of production.

Filming even proved to be dangerous, at times. Margaret Hamilton was severely burned in the Munchkinland scene, and Hamilton provided context that was later included in the DVD commentary. Hamilton was required to ride an elevator that was supposed to take her down while a bit of fire and smoke erupted to dramatize and conceal her exit. The first take ran like clockwork; however, in the DVD commentary, Hamilton states "I had to stand on this dual elevator, that went down slowly or went down fast, and in this case it dropped out from under me, it left my feet and I followed it". The fire and smoke then erupted. However, for the second take, the timing was off, and Hamilton was exposed to the flames. The grease in her copper-based makeup caught fire and had to be completely and quickly removed before the ensuing second-degree burns on her hands and face could be treated. After spending six weeks in the hospital convalescing, she returned to filming.

On February 12, 1939, Victor Fleming hastily replaced George Cukor in directing Gone with the Wind; the next day, King Vidor was assigned as director by the studio to finish the filming of The Wizard of Oz (mainly the sepia Kansas sequences, including Judy Garland's singing of "Over the Rainbow" and the tornado). In later years, when the film became firmly established as a classic, Vidor chose not to take public credit for his contribution until after the death of his friend Fleming in 1949.

Post-production

Principal photography concluded with the Kansas sequences on March 16, 1939; nonetheless re-shoots and pick-up shots were filmed throughout April, May and into June, under the direction of producer LeRoy. After the deletion of the "Over the Rainbow" reprise during subsequent test screenings in early June, Judy Garland had to be brought back one more time in order to reshoot the "Auntie Em, I'm frightened!" scene without the song; the footage of Clara Blandick's Auntie Em, as shot by Vidor, had already been set aside for rear-projection work, and was simply reused. After Margaret Hamilton's torturous experience with the Munchkinland elevator, she refused to do the pick-ups for the scene in which she flies on a broomstick that billows smoke, so LeRoy chose to have stand-in Betty Danko perform the scene instead; as a result, Danko was severely injured doing the scene due to a malfunction in the smoke mechanism.[23]

At this point, the film began a long arduous post-production. Herbert Stothart had to compose the film's background score, while A. Arnold Gillespie had to perfect the various special effects that the film required, including many of the rear projection shots. The MGM art department also had to create the various matte paintings for the background of many of the scenes.

One significant innovation planned for the film was the use of stencil printing for the transition to Technicolor. Each frame was to be hand-tinted to maintain the sepia tone; however, because this was too expensive and labor intensive, it was abandoned and

MGM used a simpler and less expensive variation of the process. During the re-shoots in May, the inside of the farm house was painted sepia, and when Dorothy opens the door, it is not Garland but her stand-in, Bobbie Koshay, wearing a sepia gingham dress, who then backs out of frame; once the camera moves through the door, Garland steps back into frame in her bright blue gingham dress (as noted in DVD extras), and the sepia-painted door briefly tints her with the same color before she emerges from the house's shadow, into the bright glare of the Technicolor lighting. This also meant that the re-shoots provided the first proper shot of Munchkinland; if one looks carefully, the brief cut to Dorothy looking around outside the house bisects a single long shot, from the inside of the doorway to the pan-around that finally ends in a reverse-angle as the ruins of the house are seen behind Dorothy as she comes to a stop at the foot of the small bridge.

Test screenings of the film began on June 5, 1939.[24] Oz initially was running nearly two hours long. LeRoy and Fleming knew that at least a quarter of an hour needed to be deleted to get the film down to a manageable running time, the average film in 1939 running just about 90 minutes. Three sneak previews in Santa Barbara, Pomona and San Luis Obispo, California helped guide LeRoy and Fleming in the cutting. Among the many cuts was "The Jitterbug" number, the Scarecrow's elaborate dance sequence following "If I Only Had a Brain," a reprise of "Over the Rainbow" and "Ding Dong the Witch Is Dead," and a number of smaller dialogue sequences. This left the final, mostly serious portion of the film with no songs, only the dramatic underscoring.

One song that was almost deleted was "Over the Rainbow". MGM had felt that it made the Kansas sequence too long, as well as being far over the heads of the target audience of children. The studio also thought that it was degrading for Judy Garland to sing in a barnyard. Producer Mervyn LeRoy, uncredited associate producer Arthur Freed, and director Victor Fleming fought to keep it in, and they all eventually won. The song went on to win the Academy Award for Best Song of the Year, and came to be identified so strongly with Garland herself that she made it her theme song. In 2004, the song was ranked #1 by the American Film Institute on AFI's 100 Years…100 Songs list. After the preview in San Luis Obispo in early July, The Wizard of Oz was officially released in August 1939 at its current 101-minute running time.

Reception

The movie received critical acclaim upon release. Frank S. Nugent considered the film a "delightful piece of wonder-working which had the youngsters' eyes shining and brought a quietly amused gleam to the wiser ones of the oldsters;" "not since Disney's Snow White has anything quite so fantastic succeeded half so well."[30] Nugent had issues with some of the film's special effects, writing that "with the best of will and ingenuity, they cannot make a Munchkin or a Flying Monkey that will not still suggest, however vaguely, a Singer's Midget in a Jack Dawn masquerade. Nor can they, without a few betraying jolts and split-screen overlappings, bring down from the sky the great soap bubble in which the Good Witch rides and roll it smoothly into place." According to Nugent, "Judy Garland's Dorothy is a pert and fresh-faced miss with the wonder-lit eyes of a believer in

fairy tales, but the Baum fantasy is at its best when the Scarecrow, the Woodman and the Lion are on the move."[30]

Roger Ebert chose it as one of his Great Films, writing that "'The Wizard of Oz' has a wonderful surface of comedy and music, special effects and excitement, but we still watch it six decades later because its underlying story penetrates straight to the deepest insecurities of childhood, stirs them and then reassures them."[31]

Writer Salman Rushdie acknowledged "The Wizard of Oz was my very first literary influence" in his 2002 musings about the film.[32] He has written: "When I first saw The Wizard of Oz it made a writer of me."[33] His first short story, written at the age of ten, was titled "Over the Rainbow."[33]

In a 2009 retrospective article about The Wizard of Oz, San Francisco Chronicle film critic and author Mick LaSalle declared that the film's "entire [Munchkinland] sequence, from Dorothy's arrival in Oz to her departure on the Yellow Brick Road, has to be one of the greatest in cinema history — a masterpiece of set design, costuming, choreography, music, lyrics, storytelling and sheer imagination."[34]

On the film-critics aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, 99% of 105 critics gave the film a positive review, with the critics consensus: "An absolute masterpiece whose groundbreaking visuals and deft storytelling are still every bit as resonant, The Wizard of Oz is a must-see film for young and old.".[35] At Metacritic, which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics, the movie received the maximum score of 100, based on four reviews, indicating "Universal acclaim".[36]

Discussion Questions

1. After reading the detailed production history detailed before, how does the methods of production match to what you have learned about producing a movie during the Hollywood Studio System? Include in your answer whether *The Wizard of Oz* would be an A production or a B production. How do you know?

2. How do you see color and black and white photography both being used to suggest the mood and tone of the various scenes? Cite specific scenes to demonstrate your understanding. Do you feel that color was used effectively in this movie? Why or why not?

3. *The Wizard of Oz* is considered by many to be a children's fantasy picture, as well as a musical. How is music used in this move? Do the songs advance the plot by expressing the characters longings and emotions, or is music just an interruption to the plot of the movie? Why do you think the songs are still famous 75 years later?

4. Why do you think the make-up men assigned to the film took such efforts to simply not hide the actors faces behind masks? What effect is achieved by the actor's faces still being recognizable despite their make-up?

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5. If you were forced to decide on one scene as your favorite, what would it be and why? Please seriously answer this question. Thoughtful answers are important here.

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6. Why do you think that *The Wizard of Oz* is still immensely popular over 75 years after its release? Why do many feel it is arguably the best movie to be released during the Studio System?

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7. What is the theme of the movie? Back up your answer with specific scenes or ideas to demonstrate an understanding of the film.

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